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Weapons Found After Alarming Post Forces Lockhart K-8 School Lockdown

Knives confiscated as VIDE and VIPD collaborate to ensure safety; school resumes following thorough inspection and all-clear confirmation

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Students were searched outside the Lockhart K-8 campus in St. Thomas following an ominous message on social media.

The V.I. Dept. of Education announced on Thursday the steps it took in response to a concerning and cryptic Facebook post involving Lockhart K-8 School. According to the department, due to the alarming nature of the post, school officials promptly activated security protocols on the morning of Thursday, September 19, 2024, before classes began.

The post, published on the popular Facebook group "What's Going on, St. Thomas?", suggested prayers for Lockhart K-8. The post sent the St. Thomas community into an uproar, as a fight had taken place a day earlier at the school.

According to VIDE, Director of School Safety and Disaster Planning, Mr. Irvin Mason, along with school leadership and the V.I. Police Department, treated the post as a potential threat, prioritizing the safety of students, faculty, and staff.

VIDE emphasized that every threat, regardless of its nature, is taken seriously by the department and its supporting agencies. In this case, several security measures were immediately put into place. Thorough bag searches of all students and staff were conducted to ensure no weapons or prohibited items entered the school premises. Additionally, the VIPD carried out a detailed sweep of the entire Lockhart K-8 School campus, inspecting for any objects that could pose a threat.

During these precautionary actions, a number of knives were confiscated. Mr. Mason confirmed that the items were secured and that no further threats were identified. Following the VIPD's sweep of the campus, an official all-clear was issued.

To maintain a secure environment, an increased police presence will remain at Lockhart K-8 School throughout the day. These officers are collaborating closely with the School Resource Officers (SROs) already assigned to the school, ensuring continuous vigilance and safety for all individuals on campus.

VIDE acknowledged the concern and anxiety the anonymous post caused among parents, students, and the broader community. Mr. Mason assured the public, stating, "Rest assured, any threat whether posted on social media, received via an anonymous call, expressed verbally, or presented in any other manner will be treated with the utmost urgency. At the VIDE we are committed to safeguarding our students, faculty, and staff by working closely with law enforcement agencies like the VIPD to address such matters immediately."

The department also called on the public to assist in maintaining a safe environment by reporting any suspicious activity or individuals responsible for false threats.

VIDE expressed gratitude to the Virgin Islands Police Department for their swift and comprehensive response, which helped ensure the safety of Lockhart K-8 School. At present, all students, faculty, and staff are safe, and regular school operations have resumed without further incident.